

**BOARD of CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS**  
**COUNTY of CAPE MAY**

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*County Administrator*



April 24, 2009

Congressman Frank A. LoBiondo  
2<sup>nd</sup> District, New Jersey  
2427 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-3002

**Re: SAFETEA-LU Reauthorization**  
**High Priority Projects**  
**Ocean Drive (CR 621) Improvements including**  
**Middle Thorofare, Mill Creek and Upper Thorofare Bridge Replacements**  
**Lower Township, Cape May County**

Dear Honorable Congressman LoBiondo:

Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders seeks your assistance in securing the necessary federal funds to improve 2.7 miles of Ocean Drive between Route NJ 109 and Madison Avenue in Lower Township that includes the replacement of the Middle Thorofare, Mill Creek and Upper Thorofare Bridges.

This stretch of Ocean Drive connects Cape May City with the Wildwoods and serves as an evacuation route during flood tide events. The Middle Thorofare Bridge is 1,039 foot long with a movable span that opens between 20 and 40 times each day for the passage of marine vessels. The narrow width of the navigation channel through the Middle Thorofare Bridge restricts the economic growth of the Cape May fishing fleet. The Port of Cape May is New Jersey's largest commercial fishing port and ranks in the top 5 in the United States for the value of landings. As a result of the number of bridge openings, significant backups of traffic occur during the summer months.

The Middle Thorofare Bridge is deemed structurally deficient due to its inability to carry modern-day vehicle loads greater than 15 tons and functionally obsolete due to its narrow width. This bridge has a sufficiency rating of 7 out of a 100 point system with the 100 being a perfect bridge. The Mill Creek and Upper Thorofare Bridges are also functionally obsolete due to their narrow widths and have sufficiency ratings of 46.8 and 47.3 respectively. Ocean Drive is one of the last roadways to Wildwood to close due to flooding, but does experience periodic flooding. The roadway is in poor condition with areas of settlement.

Cape May County has held four (4) public information centers regarding the project and the Cape May County Engineer has made presentations of the project to countless numbers of civic organizations. The project has received significant support from the public, local businesses, commercial fishing industry and the Cape May County Chamber of Commerce (see attachment). Numerous meetings have been held with public and regulatory agencies to discuss potential issues with the project. The County intends on holding additional public information centers to inform the public about the project and to gain concurrence for the project. Due to the size of the project, regulatory agencies may require public hearings prior to issuing permits.

An improvement project of this magnitude (\$232,000,000) with such economic and regional impact is beyond the financial capabilities of Cape May County and its local agencies to fund. Federal funds are sorely needed to make this project become a reality.

This project is currently generating the necessary studies to support the National Environmental Policy Act documentation process. The County is seeking federal funds to take the project through the design and construction phases.

The Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders strongly supports the Ocean Drive, County Road No. 621, Improvements between Route NJ 109 and Madison Avenue that includes the replacement of the Middle Thorofare, Mill Creek and Upper Thorofare Bridges. This improvement project will greatly enhance the safety of the motoring public, reduce congestion associated with the numerous bridge openings, present a reliable evacuation route for the Wildwoods and Diamond Beach section of Lower Township and provide a tremendous economic boost to the region by allowing the Cape May fishing fleet to utilize larger boats.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact the Cape May County Engineer, Dale Foster at (609) 465-1035.

I look forward to working with you on this highly critical and important improvement project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Daniel Beyel".

Daniel Beyel  
Freeholder Director

DB/DMF/kc



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## **SOUTH JERSEY TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

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April 24, 2009

Hon. Frank A. LoBiondo  
Member of Congress  
2427 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC, 20515-3002

Dear Congressman LoBiondo:

I am writing in support of the Ocean Drive Improvements project in Lower Township (including the replacement of the Middle Thorofare, Mill Creek, and Upper Thorofare Bridges) submitted by Cape May County for consideration as a High Priority Project in the upcoming reauthorization of SAFETEA – LU. Cape May County is seeking \$232,000,000 in federal funding for the project. This improvement project will greatly enhance the safety of the motoring public, reduce congestion associated with the numerous bridge openings, present a reliable evacuation route for the Wildwoods and Diamond Beach section of Lower Township and provide a tremendous economic boost to the region by allowing the Cape May fishing fleet to utilize larger boats.

**The South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization fully supports the Ocean Drive Improvements project in Lower Township project.**

**Should this project be included in the SAFETEA – LU reauthorization, all of our public involvement procedures for the Transportation Improvement Program will be maintained, including formal public notice, website posting, and presentation at an open public meeting.**

**No other federal, State, local, or private funding sources are anticipated to be used to advance this project.**

Thank you for your consideration of this critical project, and please do not hesitate to contact me for further information.

Sincerely,

Timothy G. Chelius, P.P., AICP  
Executive Director

TGC:mal

Cc: Hon. Daniel M. Beyel, Director, Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders